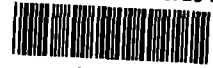




EPA Region 5 Records Ctr



347968

News**City eyes abandoned factory**[Print Page](#)**Officials concerned about chemicals, conditions at Meridian Automotive plant****By Ron Hamilton**
Staff writer

Published Wednesday November 25 2009 2:41 PM US/eastern

Federal environmental agency inspectors are to investigate conditions at an abandoned automotive parts factory on the north side of Shelbyville this morning after city officials expressed concerns about toxic chemicals left behind when company officials closed the doors last summer.

According to Shelbyville building commissioner Tom DeBaun and Fire Chief Todd Anderson, stacks of metal drums containing dangerous, toxic chemicals such as paint and sulphuric acid were left behind at the Meridian Automotive Systems facility, 501 Northridge Drive, when officials closed down the plant the first week of July.

"We've contacted plant officials, but they seemed less than concerned about the dangerous situation out there," DeBaun told members of the Shelbyville Board of Public Works and Safety Tuesday morning.

DeBaun said city officials contacted the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, which in turn contacted the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

"The EPA is taking the lead on this," DeBaun said. "They plan to do a walk-through inspection, accompanied by members of our city fire department. As far as I know, they don't plan to take any immediate action, but they will make certain the property is secured when they leave."

When contacted by telephone, Meridian's company attorney, John Carroll, told The Shelbyville News that the property is currently being held as collateral in bankruptcy proceedings.

"The situation out there should be resolved within 15 days," he said.

Local firefighters were unwilling to wait, however.

Anderson told city officials that dangerous chemicals have been left stacked in piles both inside and outside the building, including inside a hazardous materials shed located near the building. He also noted that the plant's fire sprinkler system was still full of water, even though the system has been inoperable for some time.

The fire chief expressed fears that water in the pipes would freeze in the unheated plant this winter, causing the pipes to crack, break and lose water.

"We're just trying to be proactive and prevent something bad from happening out there, especially when the weather turns cold," he said.

Amy Skillman, the city's municipal separate storm sewer system operator (MS4), told city officials that a tank containing about 23 feet of water was left behind when the plant was abandoned. She feared it also would freeze and break this winter.

"The floor drains at the facility lead into the city's wastewater treatment system," she said

According to DeBaun, plant officials "just walked away from the facility" when the business closed down the first week of July, costing 295 workers their jobs. A month later, on Aug. 11, company officials filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy liquidation. Since that time, negligence on the part of company officials has forced city street department employees to take over mowing and maintenance of the property, city officials said.

As recently as three years ago, Meridian had 370 employees, according to the Shelby County Chamber of Commerce Business and Community Directory. Meridian, headquartered in Allen Park, Mich., is a supplier of technologically advanced metals, thermoplastics and composite products with plants in Canada, Mexico, Michigan and others in Indiana, including one in Rushville. The local plant supplied rubber or plastic mills, extrusion dies, injection molds and console modules.

Copyright © 2009 The Shelbyville News

[x] Close Window